

very people that Walter has come into contact with. It is with great pride that I recognize such a dedicated visionary in the field of music education.●

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL MICHAEL P. BARBERO

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wish to publicly commend and congratulate COL Michael P. Barbero, U.S. Army, upon his retirement after 26 years of military service. I have come to know and respect Colonel Barbero over the last 4 years, during which time he served as the Chief of the Army Senate Liaison Division in the Office of the Army Chief of Legislative Liaison. In that capacity, Colonel Barbero was instrumental in improving the understanding of senators and staff concerning a vast myriad of Army issues, in particular an understanding of the Army's role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the effect of those wars on the Army and its soldiers and their families.

Colonel Barbero escorted over 50 congressional delegations, including 13 to Iraq and 3 to Afghanistan. I myself was privileged to have Colonel Barbero as an escort at my specific request on several of my own trips to both of those areas. He worked tirelessly to ensure my visits were coordinated with all of the relevant agencies and individuals so that I could visit the places, meet with the people, and deal with the issues that were critical for me as the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I am extremely grateful for the service he provided me and my staff during those trips.

Colonel Barbero's Senate assignment was the capstone to an outstanding career of service to our Nation. After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1982, Colonel Barbero served as an armor officer in command and staff positions in a number of tank and cavalry units in the United States and Germany. These assignments culminated in a position as the operations officer for the 2nd Brigade of the famed 1st Cavalry Division.

Colonel Barbero also served in a number of high-level positions on both the Army and Joint Staffs at the Pentagon, as an exercise planner, analyst, and strategist. As an assistant professor at the U.S. Military Academy, Colonel Barbero played an important role in the development of the future officers and leaders of the Army.

Colonel Barbero holds a master of science degree in industrial engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Ranger Tab, Parachutist Badge, and is a holder of the Army Armor Association's Order of St. George.

Colonel Barbero is married to the former Vicki Jo Drake of Storm Lake, IA. They have two children, Mary—14—and Michael—10. I congratulate them

too on their husband's and father's retirement from the Army. The demands of military life are such that military families also sacrifice and serve the Nation along with their soldier.

Mr. President, the Army, the Senate, and the Nation are lucky to have had the service of such a great soldier. He will be sorely missed.●

CONGRATULATING LANCE MACKEY

● Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today I congratulate Lance Mackey, of Fairbanks, AK, on achieving the incredible feat of twice winning the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and the Yukon Quest Sled Dog Race—two 1,000-mile races—in the same year. Last year, Lance became the first musher ever to win both races in the same calendar year. An achievement, which was previously labeled impossible, has for the second consecutive year been accomplished by Lance Mackey and his team.

For those who are unfamiliar with either the Iditarod or the Yukon Quest, these races are the world's two longest dogsled races. Both races, which span over 1,000 miles of rigid mountains, frozen tundra, and dense forests, are true tests of determination and dedication. Not only does the rugged terrain pose a huge challenge, but so does the weather, which frequently drops to 30 or 40 degrees below zero, and the wind, which can gust up to 100 miles per hour.

The annual Yukon Quest Sled Dog Race is a 1,000-mile international trek from Fairbanks, AK, to Whitehorse, Canada. Lance Mackey and his team of canine athletes crossed this great distance in 10 days, 12 hours, and 14 minutes, claiming victory for the fourth year in a row.

Only 11 days after his Yukon Quest victory, Lance and six of his dogs that competed in the Yukon Quest joined seven of his other dogs and began the 1,100-mile Iditarod Sled Dog Race. This race, which starts in Willow, AK, and ends in Nome, AK, commemorates the 1925 diphtheria serum relay run where dogsled teams had to pass along a vaccine from Anchorage to Nome in order to save countless lives. The Iditarod race is no longer run as a relay but is a race completed by individual dogsled teams.

The 1,100-mile journey travels primarily through the great Alaskan wilderness. Throughout this year's Iditarod, Lance Mackey was challenged by not only the weather and terrain but also by other extraordinary mushers such as the 2006 Iditarod winner, Jeff King, and other previous winners of this great race. On the morning of March 12, 2008, thousands gathered at the famous burled wood arch on Front Street in Nome, AK, to cheer on Lance Mackey, as he sledged to back-to-back wins at the Iditarod, beating the odds as well as the extremely competitive international field. Lance Mackey and his team of canines com-

pleted the race in 9 days, 11 hours, and 46 minutes, beating four-time Iditarod champion Jeff King by 1 hour and 19 minutes.

For the past few years, Lance has shown a mastery of working with and training canine athletes for the sport of dog mushing. As the Anchorage Daily News aptly stated:

A musher doesn't win four straight, 1,000 mile Yukon Quests and two straight Iditarods by making dogs run. He wins by making dogs want to run.

Lance Mackey continues to impress all of us with his remarkable achievements and record-setting performances. It is my honor to stand before this body today to congratulate Lance Mackey and his team of amazing dogs. Lance is a world-class dog musher and a true Alaskan hero, and I wish him and his team all the success in the future.●

TRIBUTE TO WILL ETTA "WILLIE" OATES

● Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I wish to honor the life of a woman revered across the State of Arkansas as a humble public servant. Will Etta "Willie" Oates, affectionately known as the "Hat Lady," passed away on March 4, 2008. She was loved for her active volunteerism and Arkansas pride.

Although she was born in Kansas, she was an Arkansan through and through. Willie was born to Harry and Fern Long in Arkansas City, KS, on January 14, 1918. She graduated from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville where she was a cheerleader and met her life-long husband, Dr. Gordon Oates. It was at the university that she earned the nickname Willie.

After World War II, Willie began her career of volunteerism in Little Rock. She was selected as Little Rock Woman of the Year in 1955. In 1959, she became the first woman elected to the Arkansas Legislature in more than 30 years.

Yet, it was her "hat skits" that captured people's attention. She traveled across Arkansas and more than 40 States speaking, performing her hat skits, judging various competitions, and serving as a grand marshal at many parades. In 1989, she was officially designated by proclamation of the State legislature as "Arkansas's Hat Lady."

During her lifetime, Willie belonged to over 50 national, State, and local organizations, served on over 25 boards, and was active in the First Presbyterian Church of Little Rock.

Willie Oates was my dear friend and an inspiration to all that knew her. I pay tribute to this public servant of Arkansas and express my greatest condolences to her family. She will be missed.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to